

# Understanding Your Body

Wave 11 Oct 1984

By Dr. Janet Kelly

"I've got a sinus headache," surely sounds more educated and sophisticated than a simple headache, especially if you're explaining to your boss why you won't be at work today! And, a runny nose sounds much more serious when you call it "sinusitis." The sinuses are often blamed for what are really ordinary headaches, toothaches, or the common cold. However, these air pockets which surround the nose can and do cause a significant amount of discomfort. What are the sinuses?

The sinuses are airfilled pockets of mucous membranes connected to the inside of the nose. There are four groups of sinuses: in each cheek directly over the teeth, between the nose and the eye, deep in the head behind the nose and eye, and over the eyes. Usually the sinuses occur in pairs, one on each side of the face. All of us have different numbers and sizes of sinuses; in fact, 5% of the population do not have any sinuses over their eyes. What do sinuses do?

No one really knows! One current theory is that sinuses buffer the change in air pressure when we breathe, reducing trauma to the surrounding tissues. Another theory is that the sinuses may cushion the skull against external trauma. When do the sinuses cause symptoms?

Pain can result when the membranes that line these pockets become swollen or inflamed, or when the normal drainage of mucous is slowed or stopped. This can be the result of a nasal or dental infection which has spread to the sinuses, an allergy affecting the sinuses, or irritation from swimming or diving, pressure changes from

air travel, or excessively dry overheated climate. Flying or swimming with a cold should be avoided.

The two main symptoms which usually bring people to the doctor's office are trouble breathing through the nose or a runny nose. Other symptoms which can be traced to the sinuses include headaches, nosebleeds, frequent sneezing, facial tenderness, a constant unpleasant taste or bad smell and swollen eyes or face.

Why do the sinus membranes become irritated?

There are four main reasons: allergies, a "vasomotor" condition, nasal obstructions, and infections.

Allergies: people may be allergic to any number of items. The mucous membranes swell when exposed to the allergic substance. The production of mucous causes excessive discharge and a runny nose.

The vasomotor condition is similar to an allergic response, but the patient has no evidence of allergies. This is a frustrating sinus problem, but there is a large emotional component to vasomotor sinus condition. People with chronic anxiety or depression often have constant runny noses, similar to the runny nose we get when we feel sad and cry.

Nasal obstruction may result from a structural problem such as a crooked nose. This can occur from an accident or could be present at birth. The disturbed sinus drainage predisposes them to infection.

Infections can be either viral or bacterial. A viral infection of the sinuses is very common with a cold. Generally, it is the bacterial infections that can cause serious complications if left untreated.

How would I know if I had a sinus infection?

Acute sinus infections often follow a cold or flu that causes nasal symptoms. There will be a stuffy and runny nose, postnasal drip, severe headaches in the area of the sinuses, and facial pain over the involved sinus. The pain, which is often sharp, is usually worse during the day and subsides in the late evening. Sometimes there can be dental pain. With the right antibiotics, decongestants, analgesics and local heat you can usually be successfully treated in a week to ten days. Surgical drainage may be required in rare cases. How would I know if I had a chronic sinus infection?

Chronic sinusitis usually produces low grade, rather than sharp pain that lingers for a long time. The pain results from permanent changes to the mucous lining of the sinus. You usually have a constant stuffiness, coughing and postnasal drip. Chronic sinus problems are worse in the winter with exposure to dry, overheated air, cold temperatures and dramatic variations in temperature from going in and out of doors. Most people with chronic sinus problems are worse during the change of seasons in March and October, when there are rapid fluctuations in weather.

With a sinus problem should I always see a doctor?

Most people treat themselves with over-the-counter nasal syrups and drops to clear their stuffed noses. They work beautifully, but only briefly, at the same time that these medications shrink the blood vessels so you can breathe easier, they also irritate the vessels. After the shrinking occurs there is a "rebound phenomenon" whereby the membranes swell more than before. You should not use a spray for more than two consecutive days. You should consult a physician "when a cold



Teresa Lisonbee, will serve as president. As Vice President Sandy Smith will assist her and Lisa Carman will serve as Secretary. Alyson Hicken, as Treasurer, Mary Jane Besendorfer as Reporter, and Jill Probst as Historian.

classroom and helps them prepare for participating in business.

The non-profit national organization boasts 170,000 members participating in 8,000 chapters. Wasatch High School has more than 30 members. These stu-

both. The theme this year, "Free Enterprise," works, say the officers, "because we do." Students who want to join are encouraged to register and pay dues of \$8.50 before Oct. 12. They may contact any FBLA officer or Cheryl Hardy, Advisor.

# Adult Leaders School Attended by Homemakers

USU Home Extension Leader Becky Pappas, Lynn Sohrweide, Colleen Tolley, June Hicken and Karen Springer attended the Adult Leaders School at USU Oct. 2 thru Oct. 4 with "Mastering Your Brave New World."

New world? Well, what's so new?

Maybe nothing, maybe everything. Yesterday it was rare to hear of a person over 100 years old. Today, there are over 30,000 people in the United States by the year 2000 or only 16 years away there will be over 100,000 people in our country, over 100.

Yesterday, no one knew of such a thing as PMS. Today we women can thank the Lord, we who suffer PMS are not crazy, mean devils, we just need help and now we can get that help with the work that Dr. William R. Keyes, Jr. and Patty Cannon are doing.

Yesterday, we never heard of computers. Today, it's everyone's work and child's play. The best of today are IBM for business, Apple II for home and Atari for games are number one on Dr. Bruce Godfrey's list.

The Idea Fair which was held Tuesday evening gave us more ideas than the few of us can present, but we will give our best.

The classes included were talking to children about their

R.D.; The Perfect Pie by Marie Lloyd; The Burden of Beauty, by Dr. Gerald Adams; Stress Coping Strategies for Farm Families, by Dr. Glen Jensen; What to Do With the Family Farm, by Dr. Bruce Godfrey, Dr. Lynn Davis, and J.D. CPA.

Communicating Across Cultures; Building Bridges, Breaking Down Walls, by Alice Smith; Improving Fitness Safely Through Aerobics, by Dr. Deana Lorentzen; Sew Your Own Active Wear and Save, by Josephine Clark, Jill Holbrook and Judy Strakey; Current Issues Women Face; Opportunities and Problems, by Dr. Cecilia Foxley; A Tour Housing of the 80's with Leona Windley; Self Defense for women by Dallas Featherstone.

A smorgasbord was held

Wednesday evening with the Extension Home Economist Association with Fay Boyer, of Coalville, President and Program by the Festival Singers with Anna Jean Skidmore Director, and Mary Fisk, accompanist.

Controlling Media Consumption in Your Home by Gordon Bowen and Making the Most of Your Somedays by Dr. Tom Lee. Make Your "Someday I will" attend USU Adult Leadership School but until then, let Becky Pappas at 654-3211 Extension 26 or any of the others mentioned if you would like help on any of the subjects mentioned for yourself, your church or club, give us a ring and we will put it on our "Someday" agenda.

Fawn Kohler  
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